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Editorial

(En)countering (Un)certainty: Shifting Orientations through Imagination and Disruption

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The essays in Issue 41 speak to the complex intersections of personal, social, and institutional uncertainty. A range of humanist, relational, posthuman, more-than-human, speculative, emergent, historical, critical, and reflective orientations, modes, and dispositions illuminate the onto-epistemological de/re-centering occurring across the landscapes of culture, education, research, academia, art, and the everyday. Authors call attention to art's ability to imagine multiple worlds, inviting divergent perspectives, frames, and lenses to question established policies and practices through a range of critical, creative, and participatory forms and methodologies.

The call for submissions for this, Volume 41 of JSTAE, went out during the summer of 2020 after the spring semester had turned online overnight to allow for social distancing, amidst COVID-19 lock-downs and months of Black Lives Matter protests globally, in response to the killing of George Floyd among other civil rights atrocities, land rights violations such as those at Standing Rock, a polarizing upcoming presidential election in the United States, and increasing divides amongst left and right wing political views in the face of rising nationalist rhetoric favoring hegemonic supremacist traditions across the world. The literal and metaphorical distance from established roles and relationships between individuals and institutions highlighted the fragility and porous boundaries of institutional structures that previously seemed immovable, and the gaps became sites of potential in which to examine habitual and normalized power relations and pose alternative modes of practice.

The lack of a predetermined theme allowed for emergent critical intersections between disability and empathy, diagnosis and self-witnessing, racial, ethnic, and gendered

minoritizing and erasure, anthropocentric destruction, and ahuman potential that may not have emerged otherwise. Empathy is addressed repeatedly in these conversations from perspectives of understanding and collective care, and also critiqued as a passively ineffective stance. The blinding, alienating, and isolating effects of ableism emerge in a number of ways. As many articles argue for political action and the transformation of art education's curriculum, we can consider what is possible when we not only ask who but what is able to speak.

Together, these pieces demonstrate how art educators are shifting our lenses and reorienting our ontological and epistemological frameworks through intersections of theory and practice with questions of rhetoric and action, positionality, visibility, and affect in formal and informal pedagogical sites by unsettling concepts of. Authors ask: Who is visible in our work and how are they viewed? Who can speak, self-identify, diagnose, choose, and how does art education enable/disable this agency?

Jason Wallin uses a graphic narrative to investigate the cannibalistic nature of academia with an imaginatively theoretical engagement with the Anthropocenic and post-Anthropocene. The piece envisions how nonhuman life may invade/ reclaim a world dictated by our deeply human conditions. This uncanny visualization becomes an unsettling mirror on the more-than-human viral effects of cultural norms in academic life. It invites us to step outside of a human-centered lens to critically contemplate the logic of this colonial and capitalist system, its viral potential to consume us completely, and our complicity in the proliferation of this phenomenon. The visual essay is particularly compelling at a time when we all are still feeling

the impacts of a global virus and trying to work through it in an illusion of normalcy.

Tim Garth employs autoethnography and photovoice to document the impact of living with physically and emotionally debilitating conditions and its attendant experiences of giving and receiving care. Documenting one day of cancer treatment, he illuminates a process that is deeply familiar to those in cancer treatment and their support groups. The images, showing him almost exclusively alone, trace the paradox of individual isolation of cancer treatment, surrounded by others who share the same diagnosis. He describes the nuances of forging connections and building relationships that are healing for the involved members of communities of care, and the need for sharing individual stories that are simultaneously individual and collective. This essay carries an eerie timeliness, as COVID-19 restructured everyday lives across the globe to become intentionally isolated. Garth's piece reminds us that the effects of disease, illness, and isolation existed prior to and simultaneously with the new worlds created from the pandemic. While the deeply humanist themes of empathy and community drive Garth's piece, it also resonates with Wallin's ahuman ontological proposition, inviting questions of a virus-centered world and the risks of ignoring the nature of relationships between social and environmental viruses and their inherently isolating impacts.

G. L. Greer examines the limitations of empathy, moving readers to think about the relationship between empathetic engagement and ways in which disability is treated as a less-than-human existence. Greer opens with an evocative set of graphic images that illuminate challenges of being indiscernible and alien to the institutional medical community, with whom

patients might be assumed to have consent in desired modes and outcomes of care. They reflect on the multiple daily exchanges in rhetoric, policy, and administrations that feign empathy and care, while superficially or overtly dismissing the actual effects of disability in an able-centric society. They question the potential for self-preservation and sustainable engaged work, while grappling with theoretical and practical nuances of trauma and empathy read through disability studies in art, specifically speaking to problematics of ableism.

Taking a different perspective on disability and representation, **Kelly Gross** examines the intersections of disability studies, inclusion, and special education in PreK-12 art and design education, by surveying teachers to study how these concepts transfer into curricular decisions, in theory and practice. As part of her analysis, Gross raises the question of how art teachers determine when and how artists' work is influenced by "disability" and when the presentation of work in this way through a lens of relevance, vis-a-vis a normativized choice. Gross's lens on disability shifts to the classroom curriculum, which is both an institutional and individual practice, where teachers make choices that often have empathic intentions but are rooted in a limited base of knowledge. This lens on disability provides a different frame on the individual realities explored in Greer's uncanny representation of a student seeking medical services and their struggle with broad misconceptions, as well as with Garth's call to better understand the hope and potential for building empathy and community through artistic documentation and inquiry.

Activating survey data differently to question educators' choices for their curriculum, **Amber Ward** explores the process of developing the

exhibition, *Sweep It Under the Rug*. This project aimed to unsettle gender roles, activating engagement with educational responsibility regarding gendered expressions of social experience. The socially engaged process visualized data from a survey on roles and expectations on gender expression administered to participants and installation contributors. Ward uses Barad's theory of intra-action to examine how emergent intra-active art provokes feeling, thinking, and doing toward a more response-able future. Data visualization as art practice expanded the potential of surveys from a representational instrument to an artistic and collective medium, considering what else is possible when a community's perspectives on gender roles develop together.

Like Garth, Gross, and Ward, **Sions and Wolfgang** question roles and representation in art education, examining the impact of arts education in de-centering normative social perspectives. Where Garth, Gross, and Ward apply concepts in disability studies and post-humanity, Sions and Wolfgang utilize Critical Race Theory to frame the pedagogical possibilities of examining the role of and resistance to whiteness as a default lens to construct socio-cultural histories, even as they center multiculturalism as a curricular imperative. They provide a literature review spanning shifts from multicultural arguments to Critical Race Theory in education and art education, drawing attention to how approaching multicultural art education through the lens of a white gaze can impact BIPOC students. The piece bridges theory and practice, providing examples of strategies for what they identify as decolonizing art education curriculum and pedagogy.

Albert Stabler also tackles the impacts of whiteness in contributing to the school-to-prison

pipeline in the US. Similarly questioning the gap between rhetoric and reality, he shares his experiences as an art educator working in K-12 schools and an adult prison using Critical Race Theory. Stabler unpacks the inherent violence to BIPOC students, centering white experiences and narratives in our institutional systems. In doing so, he draws attention to the risks of perpetuating a colonizing relationship between standardized curricula built around whiteness, and the distorted effects of its punitive nature on BIPOC students. Stabler, like Greer, addresses the limitation of an empathetic art education, warning against what he calls a falsely compassionate rhetoric, where corrective policies applied at superficial levels can do more harm than good if the white gaze through which they are constructed and applied goes unacknowledged. Here again is a reminder that relational thinking is vital in social justice art education; that a theory applied by itself, without considering its relationality with the communities involved can be harmful, in that it helps maintain the status quo while giving the illusion of change-making. Similar to Gross and Ward, Stabler reflects on data in the form of community discourse, this time from troubling commentary on a Facebook thread. This again highlights the expanding forms of data and research instruments that shape, inform, and reflect our perceptions.

Kathryn Fuller also decentralizes whiteness in her essay, by offering a curricular example to revisit social and civil histories through methodological implementation of postcolonial theory, in the form of arts based critical counter-narratives in an effort to include subjugated histories. She explores the history of ledger art, in the 19th century, where US Union troops traded accounting books with Plains

Indians, and considers how this practice can be introduced historically and practiced today as aesthetic resistance. Fuller offers the study of ledger art as examples of decolonizing strategies that can be used in art education and research in the discipline, as applied to hermeneutics and visual literacy in the service of civil discourse.

Similar to Ward and Fuller, **Clark Goldsberry** offers provocative examples of the use of text in order to revise our viewpoints and deviate from normativized dominant narratives. Goldsberry's prompts may be seen to offer potentially posthuman or more-than-human perspectives, but they clearly underline the impact of text and language as data in discourse, be it in its linguistic or visual particularity.

This issue illuminates an exciting landscape of art education practices and orientations, as we have encountered uncertainty in every area of life. The essays within this issue are diagnostic journeys to and from the perceived centers and peripheries of our worlds. They articulate the risks of ignoring invisible isolations within existing and emerging communities, and reveal the risks of facing them head on in a world where no consent appears to be present on what the expectations for the future may be. Together, these critical, imaginative, experimental, participatory, and playful forms of writing and thinking emerged as provocations about worlds that are overlooked and yet-to-come.